

**Testimony**  
**Paula Cofrancesco**  
**First Selectman, Town of Bethany**  
**February 22, 2023**

I think Ms. Gara has captured the essence of what most municipal leaders feel regarding early voting. A couple of additional thoughts to consider would be: If a Saturday is used for early voting, it should count towards the five (5) days suggested below; and that early ballots be treated similarly to absentee ballots, i.e., that the early ballots be collected and stored by the Town Clerk until Election Day. This would elevate the cost and time of setting up a tabulator each day and would be more secure.

Please allow small towns the option of reduced hours or days. The current bills would require an extensive amount of additional time and also depend on the number of staff needed. This can be an expensive proposition for many smaller towns.

If we will now have early voting, do we really need same-day registration as well?

How would this impact referenda? Applying this concept to referenda would be very costly to towns, especially if you need to hold more than one.

Please seriously consider these recommendations as this legislation has a major impact on municipalities.

**Testimony**  
**Betsy Gara**  
**Executive Director**  
**Connecticut Council of Small Towns**  
**Government Administration & Elections Committee**  
**February 22, 2023**

RE: SB-1057 - An Act Concerning the Secretary of the State and Early Voting.  
SB-1064 - An Act Concerning the Implementation of Early Voting.  
HB-5004 - An Act Implementing Early Voting.

In the November 2022 general election, voters approved a constitutional amendment that allows the General Assembly to pass legislation establishing in-person, early voting. Currently, 46 states authorize early in-person voting.

The Connecticut Council of Small Towns (COST) respectfully submits the following comments on the above-referenced proposals to implement early, in-person voting prior to election day.

COST supports efforts to implement a statutory framework allowing voters to cast a ballot in-person prior to election day, including primaries. However, we have concerns with the number of days and hours that municipalities must make early in-person voting available, given the costs associated with staffing polling sites.

Although it is anticipated that small towns may designate town halls as the polling location, many town halls are closed on Fridays or Friday afternoons and on weekends and holidays. Requiring towns to make the polling location available on weekends, holidays, and evenings will result in additional costs, including staff and overtime.

Under the various proposals under consideration, municipalities will be required to provide for 10, 14, or 18 days of in-person voting prior to election day. Given the population of many of our small towns, this will result in unnecessary costs and benefit a handful of voters. ***COST recommends that the number of days of in-person voting prior to election day be reduced to 5 days.***

In addition, under each of the proposals, the polling location must be available from 10:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m., including weekends, except on the last Wednesday and Thursday prior to the election or primary, the location must be open from 8:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m. Again, this will result in unnecessary costs, including staff and overtime. It may also prove difficult to ensure that people are available to staff polling locations because many municipalities are having difficulties hiring workers to fill vacancies.

***COST supports revisions to the bills to provide that polling locations are open during regular business hours on days when town halls are open. In addition, municipalities may keep polling locations open for additional hours at their discretion.***

We believe these revisions will provide a balanced framework for implementing early in-person voting prior to election day without imposing significant costs on municipalities.

Finally, the state should provide funding to municipalities to defray costs associated with implementing early, in-person voting. Unfunded mandates drive up property taxes, imposing a significant burden on residents and businesses.

*COST is dedicated to representing the interests of the state's small towns at the state Capitol and before state agencies.*